A REPLY

TO

AN ARTICLE IN 'THE LANCET,'

WITH

STRICTURES ON THE CONDUCT

OF

PROFESSIONAL MALIGNERS.

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A REPLY,

&c., &c.

An article indulging in gross insinuations, reflecting upon my character and professional reputation, obtained insertion in a recent number of *The Lancet*. The editor and proprietor of this journal, on his attention being directed to the groundless nature of the calumny, and to the malevolence and rancour of the charge, immediately repudiated all connection with it, declaring that the obnoxious paragraph gained admission into the pages of the journal without either his knowledge or approval; and further assured me, that it could never have obtained insertion, except, as in the present instance, through a violation of his instructions, and in disobedience to his positive orders, viz.—that no article be inserted without his supervision and previous approval; and, to use his own words—"Strange to say, it was the only one out of the whole of the original articles which I did not read." Under these circumstances, Mr. Wakley felt himself called upon, as an act of justice, to disown the offensive imputations, and to insert a contradiction, a copy of which I here transcribe :—

"DR. MASON AND DR. DAWSON.

"*We regret to find that an article appeared in our number of the 22nd ult., reflecting upon the character and professional reputation of Messrs. Mason and Dawson, which, upon inquiry, we find to be unfounded. We, therefore, as an act of justice, repudiate the animadversions alluded to, and take an early opportunity of stating our belief that they were undeserved, and of expressing our regret that they were inserted in our pages.*"

To an honourable mind—the "*mens sibi conscia recti*"—and confident in its own purity, an acknowledgment of the wrong done—a positive denial of the justice or application of the scurrilous imputations, and the expression of a sincere regret at having been unintentionally the organ of circulating an unfounded and malicious slander, ought to prove, and be accepted as, a full and satisfactory apology.

Why not, then, drop the subject? why not bury it in oblivion? This I should have done had the machinations of some secret enemy terminated with this, his first abortive attempt at slander, on its refutation and defeat: I should have been content to forget a circumstance, the contemplation of which could only serve to excite my indignation and contempt. But the slander is circulated anew. The *Lancet*, with the page folded down, and the paragraph referring to me underlined, has been sent by post to my friends and patients; three numbers were brought to me on the Monday after the contradiction appeared, by three gentlemen who are under my professional care. Since then I have been informed of several having been transmitted under precisely similar circumstances.

It has fallen to my lot to arouse the anger, and call forth the vengeance of some less successful candidate for the professional confidence of the public; and to gratify the feelings of disappointment, jealousy, and revenge thus engendered, this individual, who lurks in the dark, with the utmost abhorrence shunning the light—with that cowardice which ever characterizes low and base cunning, concealing himself behind the reviewer, and under cover of his influence—spits forth his venom. But I tell this crafty slanderer, this would-be assassin of character and hard-earned reputation, that he is unmasked—that I have my eye upon him—that he is betrayed; and that, in less than five minutes' walk, I could put my finger upon his worthless head.

The obnoxious imputations purport to be part and parcel of a legitimate *review*, in the hope that under such a disguise they might escape the observance and detection of the editor, had the article undergone his supervision. But the reader will search for principles of pathology refuted; modes of practice rejected and condemned, as both unphilosophical and unsuccessful; and errors innumerable detected and exposed: but he will search in vain; and it is only in

a subsequent number of the journal that he will be able to discover, according to the pretended modesty and mawkish delicacy of the reviewer, that I have published upon an EXCEPTIONABLE subject—pretended, I say, for this must be pretence, as Dr. Smyth made a powerful appeal to the profession, through the pages of the *Lancet* for the 28th August, 1841, which I shall here reprint:—

"It is a subject not less interesting to the moralist than to the medical practitioner; and it really is surprising to see that nothing worthy of notice is to be found on a matter so important in the various writings of standard authors. This circumstance appears remarkable and unaccountable, when experience convinces us that sexual weaknesses and imperfections, either hereditary or acquired, constitute the great majority, perhaps nine-tenths of the causes of nervousness, mental imbecility and derangement. How then are we to account for a fact like this—a fact of such frequent occurrence, and so highly philosophic and instructive, as it undoubtedly is, having obtained so little attention? Can a general feeling of ill-exercised tenderness towards the depraved habits of most of the pitiable sufferers have operated in preventing the matter from having been duly investigated, and candidly avowed and discussed, or has it resulted from ignorance? The former we are disposed to think can scarcely have been the case; for with the medical practitioner, less frequently perhaps than with any other professionalist, from the confidence so readily reposed in his calling, does delicacy or prudery supersede utility."

After what has been stated, it cannot be thought, even by a casual reader, that I have selected a subject upon which the profession had already a sufficient store of information. It is true, I might have chosen a more popular subject on which to write; and there would have been no great difficulty in compiling a work on diseases of the heart, lungs, or some other equally attractive disorder, if my object had been mere publicity. But that I may place the motives that actuated me fairly before the reader, I beg to submit the following extract from the work complained of:—

"Among the many works so constantly issuing from the medical press, replete with the most ingenious speculations, and enriched with principles founded upon the closest and most attentive observations, it unaccountably happens, that none have been specially devoted to the subject which constitutes the principal matter of the following pages. Indeed, it would seem not very inconsistent to infer that, in reality, no such diseases ever existed, as they could hardly have escaped the inquisitive vigilance of modern medicine. Strange, however, as this may appear, such diseases not only prevail, but to an extent hardly to be credited, unless by those who have devoted themselves to inquiries upon the subject.*

* *Vide* Dawson on Spermatorrhœa, Preface, p. 1.

A residence for some time on the Continent, during which I had the good fortune to enjoy the advantages of the instructions afforded by witnessing the practice of Professor Lallemand, whose researches were the only ones upon this important, though IGNORANTLY DERIDED subject, afforded me opportunities for studying the pathology and general phenomena of these (EXCEPTIONABLE) maladies, which I must have sought for in vain at any of the schools in this country.

On my return to England, and before going to press, I gave the profession and the public ample proof that I had not misspent my time, by presenting myself to the Royal College of Physicians in London, and obtaining their "Letters Testimonial," being the youngest member who ever obtained that honour. I shall here transcribe, without further comment, the regulations, and enumerate the testimonials, &c., required by the College before the candidate can present himself for examination; for I owe it to my friends and patients, after having been thus assailed, to prove to the world that I have some little pretension to its confidence.

"ROYAL COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS OF LONDON.

"REGULATIONS REGARDING CERTIFICATES AND TESTIMONIALS.

"Every Candidate for a Diploma in Medicine, upon presenting himself for examination, shall produce satisfactory evidence,—

"1. Of unimpeached moral character;

"2. Of having completed the twenty-sixth year of his age; and

"3. Of having devoted himself for five years, at least, to the study of medicine.

"The course of study thus ordered by the College comprises:—

"Anatomy and Physiology; the Theory and Practice of Physic; Forensic Medicine; Chemistry; Materia Medica and Botany; and the principles of Midwifery and Surgery.

"With regard to practical medicine, the College considers it essential that each Candidate shall have diligently attended, for three entire years, the Physicians' practice of some General Hospital in Great Britain or Ireland, containing at least one hundred beds, and having a regular establishment of Physicians as well as Surgeons.

"Candidates who have been educated abroad will be required to shew, that, in addition to the full course of study already specified, they have diligently attended the Physicians' practice in some General Hospital in this country for at least twelve months.

"Candidates who have already been engaged in practice, and have attained the age of forty years, but have not passed through the complete course of study above described, may be admitted to examination upon presenting to the Censors' Board such testimonials of character, general and professional, as shall be satisfactory to the College.

"The first examination is in Anatomy and Physiology, and is understood to comprise a knowledge of such propositions in any of the physical sciences as have reference to the structure and functions of the human body.

"The second examination includes all that relates to the causes and symptoms of Diseases, and whatever portions of the collateral sciences may appear to belong to these subjects.

"The third examination relates to the treatment of Diseases, including a scientific knowledge of all the means used for that purpose.

"The three examinations are held at separate meetings of the Censors' Board. The *vivâ voce* part of each is carried on in Latin, except when the Board deem it expedient to put questions in English, and permits answers to be returned in the same language.

"The College is desirous, that all those who receive its diploma should have had such a previous education, as would imply a competent knowledge of Greek, but it does not consider this indispensable, if the other qualifications of the Candidate prove satisfactory ; it cannot, however, on any account, dispense with a familiar knowledge of the Latin language, as constituting an essential part of a liberal education ; at the commencement, therefore, of each oral examination, the Candidate is called on to translate *vivâ voce* into Latin, a passage from Hippocrates, Galen, or Aretæus : or, if he declines this, he is, at any rate, expected to construe into English a portion of the works of Celsus, or Sydenham, or some other Latin medical author.

"In connection with the oral examinations, the Candidate is required, on three separate days, to give written answers in English to questions on the different subjects enumerated above, and to translate in writing passages from Greek or Latin books relating to medicine.

"Those who are approved at all these examinations will receive the following diploma under the common seal of the College :—

"Sciant omnes, Nos, A. B. Præsidentem Collegii Medicorum Londinenis, unà cum consensû Sociorum ejusdem, auctoritate nobis a Domino Rege et Parliamento commissâ, examinâsse et approbâsse ornatissimum virum, T. S. et ei concessisse liberam facultatem et licentiam tam docendi quam exercendi scientiam et artem medicam, eidemque summis honoribus et titulis et privilegiis, quæcunque hic vel alibi Medicis concedi solent, intra auctoritatis nostræ limites frui dedisse. In cujus rei fidem et testimonium, adjectis Censorum et Registrarii chirographis, sigillum nostrum commune præsentibus apponi fecimus, datis ex ædibus Collegii die
mensis anno Domini millesimo octingentesimo.

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_____ } *Censores.*

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_____ *Registrarius.*

"The College gives no particular rules as to the details of previous education, or the places at which it is to be obtained. It will be obvious, however, from a reference to the character and extent of the study above described, the manner in which the examinations are conducted, and the mature age of the Candidates, as affording full time for acquiring the necessary knowledge, *that there will be ample security afforded to the public and the profession, that none but those who have had a liberal and learned education can presume, with the slightest hope of success, to offer themselves for approval to the Censors' Board;* and as the College trusts, that by a faithful discharge of its own duty, it can promise itself the satisfaction of thus continuing to admit into the order of ENGLISH PHYSICIANS, *a body of men who shall do honour by their qualifications, both general and professional;* it is prepared to regard in the same light, and address by the same appellation, all who have obtained its diploma, whether they have graduated elsewhere, or not.

"In drawing up and promulgating the above regulations, the College has endeavoured fairly to look at that which is substantial, rather than that which is merely nominal, in all that concerns the qualification of its members; it has resolved to estimate all testimonials, whether they are presented under the name of certificates, diplomas, or degrees, strictly with reference to their value, and to measure them by this standard alone, as parts of the previous qualification of Candidates, which they are to verify in their examinations.

"The College feels confident, that it has overstepped neither the spirit nor letter of the laws which have invested it with the power of governing and legislating for the whole Faculty of Medicine within its jurisdiction, by thus earnestly endeavouring to maintain its character and reputation, and vindicate its claim to be the source of professional honour.

"FRANCIS HAWKINS,
"*Registrar.*

"*December 22nd*, 1838."

Having obtained my "Letters Testimonial," they were my passport to the brightest ornaments of the profession; and procured for me the advantage of having my manuscript examined and its matter scrutinized by some of the ablest and most honourable men in this metropolis, men of high standing in the College of Physicians; and they did me the honour to express their conviction, that my treatise contained much original and valuable matter; and that by directing attention to an intricate and wholly neglected subject, it would undoubtedly prove useful to the profession.

I expected, though I feared not, the lash of the reviewers, having M. Lallemand's thorny path before me. If the usual course had been pursued, and my work had been reviewed, instead of being

myself condemned for practices having no other existence than false and scurrilous insinuations, without even any attempt to criticise the matter of the work—I should have submitted without a murmu ; nor should I have ever breathed a word of complaint. Lallemand, who published upon this subject, experienced the greatest opposition and oppression; but now I am proud to state, that he, to whom I am so much indebted for having assisted me in my researches, is considered by the faculty in France one of the brightest ornaments of the profession,—having been first appointed by Government a professor at the University of Montpellier; and as a further token, he has been since called to a very high post at Paris, as a proof of how highly his researches were valued.

But everything *original*, or savouring even in the slightest degree of *novelty*, is alike doomed to hostility and opposition. "How was the Circulation of the Blood received? Harvey, its immortal discoverer, was persecuted through life; his enemies in derision styled him *The Circulator*—a word, in its original signification, meaning vagabond or quack. How wild were the theories, how fanciful the hypotheses of the eminent men of Greece and Rome—the great anatomical teachers and philosophers of the middle ages—respecting the circulation of the blood, may be inferred from the fact of their naming certain blood-vessels, *arteries*, or *air-vessels*—tubes which we have only to wound to see them pour out the living current, which contain not air but blood. The immediate reward of this discovery was *calumny*, *misrepresentation*, and the loss of his professional practice. Not content with slandering the character of its discoverer, the more *vile* and *menial* of his medical brethren made it a pretext for declining to meet him in consultation.

"Ambrose Parè, principal surgeon to the King of France, introduced the ligature as a substitute for boiling pitch, to prevent bleeding after amputation; he was the first that tied the arteries. Mark HIS reward! he was hooted and howled down by the faculty of physic, who ridiculed the idea of hanging human life upon a thread, when boiling pitch had stood the test of centuries. In vain he pleaded the agony of the old application—in vain he showed the success of the ligature. Notwithstanding all this he was persecuted with the most remorseless rancour; but fortunately for him, he had a spirit to despise, and a master to protect him against all the efforts of malice.

"The immortal Jenner, who discovered Vaccination, was not only persecuted and oppressed, but even long after the benefits which his practice had conferred upon mankind had been universally admitted, his licence to practise his profession was refused.

"Can it be wondered at that medicine should have made so little progress, if they only can advance to fortune who know nothing more than the *jargon* and *crudities* which pass for medical science? How true were the words of the son of Sirach, 'After searching the world he returned, and saw under the sun that there was neither bread to the wise, nor riches to men of understanding, nor favour to men of skill!!!'"—DICKSON'S *Fallacies of the Faculty.*

And now one word to the vile and menial members of the medical body, to whom not even the awful solemnities of a death-bed, nor that repose, so sacred and inviolable, due to approaching dissolution, can offer any barrier or impediment to the indulgence of their slanderous propensities. A dying relative is not allowed to pass away and sink into the tomb with the satisfaction and comfort of still taking pride in a name which she had hitherto held most dear, and which she had fondly cherished for the last thirty years. Fiend-like, they glide into the apartment:—"Good morning, my dear lady. You are somewhat better to-day; I am quite delighted to see you so far recovered. Have you heard from the DOCTOR lately? I was grieved to read in *The Lancet* that his name was mixed up with—eh! eh! eh!—become one of those persons we so constantly hear of, through the medium of their advertisements, and who are so justly held in contempt, not only by the profession but by all the respectable part of the public." Mean-spirited cowards; low, despicable wretches! How contemptible you must now appear, when this lasting proof of your infamy is established! You cannot escape—your own words shall betray you—every patient shall have a copy; and we shall then see how you will be received, when it is published forth to the world, that you have robbed a dying and a dear relative of what she held most precious—her relative's *fairly won* and hard-worked-for reputation—won by the destruction of the midnight oil—privation of every kind; through difficulties and impediments known only to young Physicians who build up a position and standing in this vast metropolis. I defy, I dare you! one and all such miscreants! You may carry about *The Lancet*, may lay it with the leaf folded down in your waiting-rooms—you may send it

to your patients—you may read and publish the libel in every way you please. If I am to be judged by men who have obtained their degrees from St. Andrews, at a time when my serving-man might have been made a Doctor, by payment of the fee—by men who, like a parrot, have been taught to answer questions, and in this way become apothecaries; who then instruct an engraver to christen them Surgeons; and afterwards depend for professional fame on bribing nurses, praising children, small talk, and *slander*;—if, I say, I had to depend for my professional repute on such persons, sooner than be disgraced by such a dependence, I would abandon my calling, and seek for a livelihood by the sweat of my brow. But I have laboured hitherto successfully, and am proud to be in a position to despise and pity you.

In conclusion, I would remind those reviewers whose fastidious delicacy would abandon, without the least remorse, the unfortunate victims of EXCEPTIONABLE diseases to their fate—To such I would recal the observations of Dr. Smyth:—"With the medical practitioner," says he, "less frequently, perhaps, than with any other professionalist, from the confidence so readily reposed in his calling, does delicacy or prudery supersede utility."

15, *Finsbury Circus*, *December* 10*th*, 1845.